

with such point and finish that the more rough, uneven, and emotional acting of the present day has not produced anything so good in the same line. The Prince of Wales's Theatre was the most fashionable in London, and there seemed no reason why the triumph of Robertson should not go on for ever.

But that's the strange thing about theatrical success. However great, it is limited in its force and duration, as we found out at the Lyceum twenty years later. It was not only because the Bancrofts were ambitious that they determined on a Shakespearean revival in 1875 : they felt that you can give the public too much even of a good thing, and thought that a complete change might bring their theatre new popularity as well as new honour.

I, however, thought little of this at the time. After my return to the stage in " The Wandering Heir " and my tour with Charles Reade, my interest in the theatre again declined. It has always been my fate or my nature —perhaps they are really the same thing— to be very bappy or very miserable. At this time I was very miserable. I was worried to death by domestic troubles and financial difficulties. The house in which I first lived in London, after I left Hertfordshire, had been dismantled of some of its most beautiful treasures by the brokers. Pressure was being put on me by well-meaning friends to leave this house and make a great change in my life. Everything was at its darkest when Mrs. Bancroft came to call on me and offered me the part of Portia in " The

Merchant of Venice."

I had, of course, known her before, in the
way that all
people in the theatre seem to know each
other, and I had
seen her act; but on this day, when she
came to me as
a kind of messenger of Fate, the harbinger
of the true
dawn of my success, she should have had
for me some